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TAGS: [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [MCAP](#) [AF](#) [LE](#) [PK](#) [IR](#) [SY](#) [FR](#)  
SUBJECT: USDP DISCUSSES LEBANON, AFGHANISTAN, PAKISTAN AND  
MISSILE DEFENSE WITH FRENCH OFFICIALS

Classified By: Political Minister-Counselor Josiah Rosenblatt for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

11. (S) Summary. On May 29, Eric Edelman, Undersecretary of Defense for Policy, met with French interlocutors including Gerard Araud, Political Director at the MFA, Michel Miraillet, Director of Strategic Affairs at the MOD and Francois Richier, Strategic Affairs Advisor at the Elysee, to discuss Lebanon, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Missile Defense. Richier provided a summary of President Sarkozy's phone conversation with Syrian President al-Asad and his plan to visit Lebanon on June 7, while Edelman informed the French that the USG will invest in building Lebanese institutions as a means of strengthening democracy and minimizing Hizballah's influence. Edelman further advised that negotiations on a missile defense agreement were nearly complete with the Czech Republic, but were continuing with Poland. With the issuance of the latest IAEA report on Iran, Edelman encouraged the French to exercise influence in the EU to increase economic pressure on Teheran; the GOF believes it is time to consider national measures by "like-minded" countries. The French agreed that the lack of border control in parts of Pakistan threatens Afghanistan's security and that progress in political areas such as corruption and counternarcotics will be difficult in the short term because of upcoming Afghanistan elections in 2009. Finally, Richier advised that the Defense White Paper will focus on European capabilities, and that France will promote an EU proposal to NATO to enhance NATO-EU cooperation. End Summary.

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MISSILE DEFENSE PROGRESS  
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12. (C) Edelman updated the MFA and MOD officials on recent developments on missile defense, stating that the USG would continue to pursue confidence-building measures to allay Russian concerns despite ongoing Russian criticism of the program. The U.S. has nearly concluded an agreement with the Czech Republic and then it will be up to the Czech government to present the package to their parliament, most likely this fall. Discussions with the Polish government were not proceeding as quickly because the Poles were tying the talks to the question of Poland's military modernization.

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LEBANON AND SYRIA  
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13. (S) At the Elysee, Richier was joined by Counselor for Near and Middle East Boris Boillon, who said that President Sarkozy will travel to Lebanon June 7 to demonstrate France's full support of Sleiman. Richier and Boillon said that President Sarkozy's phone call earlier that day with President al-Asad reflected the long-term French strategy of

isolating Iran by bringing Syria back into the "intellectual neighborhood." Boillon said that Sarkozy's message in the call was that since the Doha agreement represented tangible progress on the ground, Sarkozy was keeping his word in reestablishing contact with Syria, while asking for support in implementation of Doha. Sarkozy told al-Asad he was welcome at the kickoff summit for the Union for the Mediterranean in Paris on July 13. Sarkozy also said that France will consider further new steps in engagement with Syria as long as progress in Lebanon continues. Boillon said that the GOF understands U.S. skepticism about whether France's engagement with Syria will pay off, but noted that since Sarkozy does not personally have a bad history with Syria, he will treat them as a normal counterpart until they prove otherwise. Boillon said that objective benchmarks such as reestablishment of diplomatic ties with Lebanon were critical, and that the next few weeks are a critical timeframe. Richier said that France provided the IAEA imagery to confirm the reality of the Syrian nuclear facility destroyed by Israel in September. Richier said France will seek to keep the IAEA focused on Syria to maintain pressure on Asad as needed. He also noted that public attention to the facility's true nature may create further tensions within the Syrian regime.

¶4. (C) Boillon called the Doha agreement a tremendous victory for the people of Lebanon, providing a new government framework that recognizes current realities on the ground. Doha taught Hizballah the important lesson that though it may be able to win militarily, it can never win politically. Boillon acknowledged that the Saudis are bitter about the

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outcome, and said the French goal is to smooth their ruffled feathers. Boillon characterized Lebanon as an area of at least two years of successful U.S.-French cooperation. He called continued transparency with the U.S. a French priority, while acknowledging that France will maintain a less confrontational approach towards Hizballah due to its 1,600 troops in UNIFIL and its desire to keep them there. Boillon acknowledged that the opposition is unhappy with Siniora's reappointment as Prime Minister, but said that France enjoys a very good working relationship with him.

¶5. (C) MFA Political Director Araud noted that while the U.S. and France are in agreement on Lebanon, the French position is slightly nuanced. He presented the main points of the French analysis, which he said was based on "signals" picked up during various ministerial (European and Arab presumably) contacts with the Syrians, as well as the Syrian regime's readiness to engage with the Israelis. Araud stated that Syrian policy during stormy times is to duck and cover, which is what they have essentially done since the Hariri assassination. This resulted in their becoming prisoners of their alliance with Iran. Now, after Doha, they feel more secure. This allows them more room for their usual maneuvering. They're not comfortable either with being prisoners of their relationship with Iran or with the newly strengthened position of Hizballah. Araud expected that in the near future the French government would make an overture to Syria, but had not yet decided how to do so, or at what level it would be. The GOF will then use benchmarks, such as monitoring appropriate Syrian behavior in the general elections in Lebanon, to determine how best to advance.

¶6. (C) Edelman noted that the USG is now focused on building and developing the Lebanese state institutions, particularly the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF). The U.S. wants to direct an effort to building sustainable, stronger institutions which will in turn diminish Hizballah's influence and authority. Araud noted wryly that the Lebanese leadership "never misses an opportunity to disappoint" and urged that we also focus on preventing Saudi Arabia from sending more weapons to the Sunnis. Miraillet informed us that DefMin Morin is planning to visit French troops in southern Lebanon in July.

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NEXT STEPS ON IRAN  
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17. (S) Araud took note of the IAEA report which was issued this week and said it was clear that we would not be able to get a new UNSCR on sanctions. He suggested that some of the "like-minded" states meet on the margins of the next G-8 summit to discuss a strategy and study the idea of imposing national sanctions. Recent French intelligence has confirmed that the enrichment activities are on-going. Edelman observed that economic measures have had a real effect in Iran, making it harder for the Iranians to proceed with their missile program while simultaneously making life more difficult for the elite. He urged that France use its influence within the European Union to help convince reluctant countries to agree to additional economic measures, which is their best hope for influencing the regime if they don't want to see a military solution. Otherwise, we are in danger of seeing rapid proliferation in the region. Araud stated that the EU will ban the activities of Bank Melli, but said he was "not optimistic" that any other sanctions would find traction within the EU. Therefore, President Sarkozy has decided to support sanctions and other measures by like-minded countries. He also affirmed that as Dubai remains a major smuggling point and financial area for Iranian trade, it is necessary to encourage the Emirates to help enforce the measures. Edelman agreed, but noted that while the UAE was sound on many aspects of Iran policy, they were reluctant to take measures that would have a financial impact in their country. (Embassy Comment: We have consistently heard from MFA interlocutors about their concerns about UAE (in particular Dubai) as a weak spot in terms of sanctions enforcement and we will report septel about some further ideas the MFA has about targeted sanctions on Iran.)

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PAKISTAN AND AFGHANISTAN  
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18. (C) USDP Edelman expressed appreciation for the arrival of French troops in RC-East, currently planned for

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mid-summer. He referred to the SecDef Gates letter to DefMin Morin which requested re-deployment of French SOF. He thanked the GOF for hosting the Afghanistan Support Conference in June and stated that we hope to focus President Karzai's attention on issues of corruption, governance and counter-narcotics, but with the 2009 Afghan elections approaching, it would be a difficult environment in which to achieve progress. To address the ongoing security concerns, the international community must solve the problem of safe haven in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) in Pakistan. Unfortunately, the current Pakistani leadership is more focused on the internal political disputes in Islamabad, rather than the threat from the FATA. Richier observed that any Pakistani government initiatives in the FATAs raise suspicions as to who is directing them, given the instability in Islamabad. Edelman noted that there has been an increase in cross-border activity. The USG will be working to train and equip the frontier corps and Pakistan Special Forces, as well as tying in an economic and political development strategy run by the State Department. We have to reassure Pakistan that we are with them for the long-term. Araud agreed, but expressed skepticism that any Pakistan government would be capable of effectively patrolling its own borders. He also noted that the Afghanistan Support Conference is not just a pledging conference; it also has a political dimension and the French hope to spur discussion on issues such as how to better integrate the Pashtun tribes.

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AFRICOM  
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¶9. (C) USDP Edelman discussed AFRICOM briefly with Michel Miraillet at the MOD, informing him that it appeared that it would take longer than expected to establish a headquarters on the continent. In the mid-term, the USG may establish a headquarters in Europe, but we wanted to be careful to avoid concerns about former colonial relationships. Miraillet noted that Poland was very interested in ESDP actions, which are more likely to take place in Africa. Also, Brussels could be a logical site for an AFRICOM headquarters, because it has excellent infrastructure and little colonial baggage, outside of the Congo. Portugal has also maintained good relations with its former colonies and as a smaller European country, it is unlikely to be viewed as trying to re-establish imperial control.

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DEFENSE WHITE PAPER, EU-NATO COOPERATION  
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¶10. (C) Richier provided a brief update on the Defense White Paper, which is scheduled for release next month. He said the President will soon review the current draft, which is still in the "shaky interagency" stage. The core priority will be reinforcement of European military capabilities, though popular demand within the EU will probably require a focus on civilian capabilities as well. France sees the first step as updating the EU's 2003 security strategy, which contained many of today's key elements but did not sufficiently link them. Richier said the GOF sees an overall need to raise awareness within Europe of security threats, and noted that Europe as a whole has too many soldiers and far too little equipment. France will seek to promote consensus on identifying needs as well as securing commitments and funding. Two examples of initiatives that France will seek to promote, both of which arise from the March French-British summit discussions, are a trust fund to acquire helicopters, and maritime interoperability for a European carrier group around a French or British aircraft carrier. France also wishes to encourage more efforts in research and development, pooling funds, and avoiding redundancies. Richier said that identifying concrete deliverables, including incremental benchmarks, is necessary; he acknowledged that Europe has not made much progress towards the Headline Goal and that a deployable force of 60,000 remains the end objective. A nearer-term goal would be the capacity to deliver in a few years a significant operational capability, and France will seek to define the numbers and types of personnel and equipment that would constitute that capability.

¶11. (C) Regarding EU-NATO cooperation, Richier said France will promote during its EU Presidency a proposal from the EU to NATO on modalities to enhance their cooperation. The proposal would be at the High Representative level in order

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to avoid the national entanglements that have thus far impeded progress at NATO on France's 2007 proposals to enhance cooperation. On the question of NATO integration/ESDP, Araud commented that he didn't anticipate major problems, except perhaps with the British. At the same time, he asked that we remain mindful that all of the Socialist opposition and half of the President's own party are opposed to or wary of Sarkozy's initiative to reintegrate France into NATO's military command.

¶12. (U) USD(P) has cleared this cable.

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